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<p>15. Abstract: The threat to commercial shipping posed by terrorist organizations is significant. Large commercial vessels are easy targets for determined terrorist and the value of these vessels and their cargoes make them attractive not only to regional terror groups, but also to international organizations with aspirations of disrupting the economic lifelines of the industrialized world.</p> <p>The US Navy has inherited the task of protecting global maritime access to markets and resources. Naval operational doctrine however, has not kept pace with the threat. Despite a shift in emphasis from "blue water" operations to the littorals, naval doctrine for the protection of shipping remains focused on conventional air, surface and subsurface threats. Moreover, the lessons of <i>Operation Earnest Will</i>, our most recent experience with unconventional threats to shipping, seem to have been forgotten. Although the assets, training, and tactical doctrine necessary to conduct a counterterrorism operation in the maritime arena exist, there is no coherent and comprehensive operational doctrine to tie it all together.</p> <p>The US Navy should prepare an operational doctrine for Maritime Counterterrorism. Some of what is necessary to create this doctrine is already codified in the canon of Naval Coastal Warfare. The remainder, however, will need to be created from scratch. Contemporary joint doctrine correctly places counterterrorism under the aegis of military operations other than war. Accordingly, the principles of MOOTW are relevant to Maritime Counterterrorism operations. Particularly when considered in relation to the strategies and characteristics of terrorism, the principles of objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy serve as solid departure point in the crafting of this doctrine.</p>			
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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
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*In Search of an Operational Doctrine for Maritime Counterterrorism*

By

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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The bombing of the French-flagged supertanker *Limburg* in the Arabian Sea off Yemen's Hadramut coast on 6 October [2002] was a wake-up call to the vulnerability of vital shipping lanes in the Middle East to terrorist attacks. The tanker routes running from the Gulf to Asia, Europe, and the USA are the region's economic lifeline and any systematic attack on them would have a serious impact worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

On the same day that this attack occurred, the al Jazeera television network aired an audio tape, believed to have been made by Osama bin Laden, which seemed to take credit for the attack and warned that Islamic forces would cut the “economic lifelines” of the industrialized world.<sup>2</sup> The al Qaeda organization, however, is not the only radical group to have targeted commercial shipping. In fact, incidents of maritime terrorism have been steadily on the rise for years.<sup>3</sup>

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of terror groups capable of carrying out attacks in the maritime arena. Organizations like al Qaeda have set their sites on shipping with the expressed purpose of hindering international commerce. Others, like Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or the Philippines' Abu Saayaf, use maritime terrorism as a weapon against local governments in order to advance their separatist agendas. In any case, the end result is the same: maritime terrorism threatens to restrict global access to resources and markets. Although it is often taken for granted, global access is absolutely critical to the proper functioning of the world's increasingly interdependent economic system.

The asymmetric threat to access posed by maritime terrorism is of vital importance to the US Navy because ensuring access is at the heart of our reason for being. Naval forces, argues Captain Sam Tangredi, "are designed primarily and uniquely to control the flow of contact through the dominant mediums of human interaction and exchange... In short, armies

are designed to control territory; navies are designed to control access." Tangredi goes on to state that the United States maintains the only true oceangoing navy in the world because most nations either cannot afford to do so, or have abdicated that role to the US Navy. "In essence," he asserts, "it no longer is solely the United States' navy; it has become the world's navy -- delivering the security of access function across the entire world system."<sup>4</sup>

Is the US Navy up to the task of ensuring global access for commercial shipping? This paper argues that we are not. Although the forces, equipment, training and tactics needed to conduct an operation to suppress maritime terrorism exist, they are not tied together by a coherent operational doctrine. Despite a shift in emphasis from "blue water" to the littorals, naval doctrine for the protection of shipping remains focused on conventional air, surface and subsurface threats. Little attention has been paid to the navy's role in the protection of shipping from unconventional threats like maritime terrorism. Lacking a unifying doctrine, future operations to counter maritime terrorism will be thrown together ad hoc and will not be guided by relevant principles.

This paper begins with an analysis of the strategy, characteristics and tactics of maritime terrorism. Next, we will examine the manner in which US policy makers have typically responded to this threat. Specifically, we will consider the Pentagon's ad hoc response to unconventional threats during *Operation Earnest Will*. Next, we will survey existing naval doctrine and determine what branches of it might be relevant to maritime counterterrorism operations. Finally, this paper will offer recommendations for the drafting of a coherent and comprehensive operational doctrine to guide these operations, based on the principles of military operations other-than-war that can be found in contemporary joint doctrine: objective; unity of effort; security; restraint; perseverance; and legitimacy.

## **The Threat**

"Terrorism is premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."<sup>5</sup> Although terrorism is a tactic, terrorist organizations use it to achieve strategic objectives. Terrorism is also a tactic of weakness. "Organizations that employ terrorism as their principle means of action lack the capability to persist in open armed contest with regular government forces. They compensate for this weakness through stealth and by choosing 'soft,' high-value (or strategic) targets."<sup>6</sup> Ironically, increased security awareness in other areas has made commercial shipping a more attractive target. As it becomes more difficult for terrorists to gain access to worthwhile targets on land and in the air, it is likely that they will consider attacking sea targets, especially commercial shipping.<sup>7</sup>

Operations conducted by terrorist organizations have other common characteristics that must be considered when planning counterterrorism operations. First, terrorists control the venue of their attacks. Although isolated attacks may occur anywhere, persistent operations are more likely in regions where the terrorists enjoy some measure of popular support. This characteristic is particularly relevant to maritime operations because many of the world's most vulnerable sea lanes pass through regions that are threatened by radicalism and terrorism. Indonesia, whose troubled islands lay astride the Strait of Malacca, is one example; the Horn of Africa, which neighbors both the Strait of Bab el Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz, is another.

Second, terrorist groups control the tempo of their activities and will usually benefit from protracted, low-level operations. This can pose a challenge to counterterrorism operations because of the difficulty in maintaining the long-term political, operational and logistical support necessary to achieve success.

Third, terror attacks are frequently intended to provoke an excessive response by the target government or military force. In order to avoid falling into this trap, military forces conducting counterterrorism operations must exercise uncommon restraint. Forces that fail to show due restraint run the risk of damaging the perceived legitimacy of their operations, or the host nation government they are supporting.

Fourth, surprise and deception are key elements in nearly all terrorist operations. This not only increases the danger to the target, it also complicates force protection. Moreover, the deceptive tactics employed by terrorists often include hiding or sheltering themselves among non-combatants. Consequently, counterterrorism operations typically require complicated and restrictive rules of engagement.

Fifth, terror groups can improve the precision and lethality of their attacks by incorporating suicide tactics. Suicide serves as a force multiplier in terrorist operations and compliments surprise and deception. The threat of suicide attacks also makes the formulation of rules of engagement more problematic and can challenge the restraint of a counterterrorism force. Additionally, suicide attacks add to the difficulty of providing security for forces engaged in low-intensity conflicts.

Sixth, terrorist organizations sometimes finance their operations through organized crime, drug smuggling, and other illicit activities. In the maritime arena, these activities include piracy. Accordingly, maritime regions that suffer from high levels of violent organized crime are also vulnerable to terrorist operations. Once again, the Horn of Africa and the Indonesian archipelago are a concern. Other regions at risk include the southern Philippines and the Caribbean.

Finally, geography and distance set limits on terrorist operations. This is especially significant in the maritime environment. To ameliorate this disadvantage, terrorist groups

exploit restrictive geography, such as ports, harbors, straits, coastal waterways and archipelagoes. With the possible exception of the Sea Tiger wing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), contemporary terrorist groups have not demonstrated a capability to conduct effective attacks outside of the littorals.

The tactics used by terrorists in the maritime environment can be roughly divided into two categories: attacking ships in port; and at sea. Unlike ships at sea, stationary vessels can be attacked with relatively low technology devices and may not even require the use of a boat. If the port is not well-defended, terrorists may place an improvised explosive device (IED) on or near the target vessel. To destroy a berthed or anchored ship in a port where land access is restricted, terrorist groups may employ divers to place the IED. Where security is light, divers can be delivered by boat. Some terrorist organizations have procured sea scooters to aid divers in long, underwater transits.<sup>i</sup> Sophisticated organizations have also invested in building or buying submersibles.

Small craft, divers and mini-submersibles are all capable of deploying an assortment of sea mines, which are particularly effective in ports and harbors. A well-placed mine could sink a ship in a confined channel and effectively close a port. If mine clearance equipment were not readily available, the mere threat of striking a mine might be enough to bring traffic in a targeted harbor to a standstill.

Ships in port can also be attacked using small craft. Surprise or deception is usually required for this type of attack to succeed. Owing to the difficulty in making a safe retreat following an attack in a port or harbor, this method might also require an attacker who is willing to commit suicide.

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<sup>i</sup> Sri Lanka's Sea Tigers are believed to possess at least ten of these devices.

Innovative techniques for attacking ships in port have been devised by some terrorist organizations. Without question, the group at the cutting edge of maritime terrorism is the Sea Tiger wing of the LTTE.<sup>i</sup> In addition to building hundreds of indigenous fiberglass attack craft and at least two submersibles, the Sea Tigers have experimented with a human suicide torpedo.<sup>8</sup> In another example of innovation, Basque separatists damaged a Spanish naval vessel with a radio-controlled model boat.<sup>9</sup> Given the rapid expansion of the role of unmanned vehicles in conventional military forces, it is not surprising that terrorist groups are also experimenting with this technology. Finally, ships in port, or at sea could be targeted with explosive-laden light aircraft. Although no terrorist group has executed a successful attack against a maritime target from the air, the threat cannot be discounted.

As with attacks on ships in port, terrorist attacks on ships at sea may be intended to damage or destroy, or they may involve more complicated objectives, such as targeting passengers on cruise ships or ferries. The most common method of terrorist attack on ships at sea is fast-moving, small craft. These craft may be armed with stand-off weapons, such as heavy caliber machine guns, rockets or grenade launchers, or rigged with an explosive device. Small craft are often employed using wolf-pack tactics. Additionally, small craft may be used to transport boarding parties to the target vessel. Lastly, terrorists may use small craft to deploy mines in heavily trafficked waterways.

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<sup>i</sup> Comprised of 3,000 to 4,000 members, the Sea Tigers are organized into twelve sections, including Sea Battle Regiments; Underwater Demolition Teams; Sea Tiger Strike Groups; Marine Engineering and Boat Building; Exclusive Economic Zone-Marine Logistics Support Team; and the Maritime School and Academy. Other LTTE organizations conduct joint operations with the Sea Tigers, most notably the Black Tiger section, which is responsible for suicide operations. The Sea Tigers have indigenously produced four types of fiberglass attack craft, floating mines, underwater IEDs, and at least two mini-submarines. Sea Tiger operations have resulted in the destruction of nearly half of the Sri Lankan Navy's coastal and ocean patrol craft. Moreover, the Sea Tigers sunk Sri Lanka's largest warship in a wolf-pack suicide operation, and captured its commander. In addition to waging sustained maritime guerilla warfare against the Sri Lankan Navy and maritime terrorism against Sri Lankan fishing vessels and shipping, the Sea Tigers have engaged in terrorism and piracy against foreign-owned and operated commercial vessels.

A significant threat to ships at sea comes from the crew itself. Many of the world's commercial vessels are registered under flags of convenience and employ low-paid, multinational crews. The two countries that provide most of the world's seaman are the Philippines, home of the Abu Sayyaf group, and Indonesia, where there are numerous radical Islamic organizations.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, documented and undocumented passengers aboard commercial vessels and cruise ships can pose a threat.<sup>i</sup>

## The Response

Historically, the United States has relied on indigenous forces to respond to threats of maritime violence against commercial shipping. This is an appropriate response where the rule of law prevails. In the waters contiguous to Singapore, for example, shipping is protected by modern forces. Writing in *The New York Times*, Keith Bradsher detailed the recent departure of the *Petro Ranger*, a 420-foot tanker carrying gasoline and diesel fuel from Singapore's immense refinery:

...a brown Singaporean F-4 Skyhawk (*sic*) fighter flew overhead on combat air patrol, a precaution started after the attacks on September 11 of last year. A Singaporean Hawkeye airborne surveillance plane circled twice over the refinery in the next hour, while a half-dozen fast patrol boats with deck guns and a small gray warship cruised the anchorage. One of the patrol boats escorted the *Petro Ranger*.<sup>11</sup>

Not surprisingly, maritime violence does not thrive in the Port of Singapore. Fifty miles away, however, in the heart of the notorious Strait of Malacca, ships like the *Petro Ranger* are left to their own devices. Piracy, and its cousin maritime terrorism, thrives in the waters of Southeast Asia, and off the Horn of Africa, because local governments do not have the wherewithal to enforce national, let alone international law. "About 90 percent of maritime

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<sup>i</sup> It is worth noting that the men who hijacked the *Achille Lauro* came aboard posing as passengers.

attacks occur in the developing world. Often the affected governments are corrupt, ineffective, poorly resourced or lack the know-how to fight the threat."<sup>12</sup>

Where local governments have not been effective in combating maritime violence, the United States has responded by encouraging the owners and operators of commercial shipping to implement defensive measures.<sup>i</sup> Self-protection is a cornerstone of US policy regarding maritime violence in the troubled waters of Southeast Asia. By in large, these measures are designed to discourage small-scale piracy and are not effective against determined pirates or terrorists.

When local allies have not been forthcoming, and defensive measures have not deterred attacks on commercial shipping, the United States has, on a few occasions, responded with military force. This military response, however, has typically been ad hoc and not guided by a coherent operational concept. Furthermore, the Pentagon has placed the burden of carrying out this mission squarely on the shoulders of “high-demand, low-density” special operations forces. This assertion is well-illustrated by US joint operations to counter Iranian mining and small boat attacks during *Operation Earnest Will*. Although the aggressor in this case was the state of Iran, many of the maritime guerilla warfare tactics used by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (IRG) were identical to tactics that could be expected from a sophisticated terrorist organization.

*Operation Earnest Will* was conceived as a response to attacks on third country shipping in the Arabian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War. The United States reacted by re-flagging and escorting a number of Kuwaiti tankers through the dangerous waters of the Gulf. The first convoy of two tankers and three US warships met with immediate disaster. Twenty miles west of Farsi Island, the SS *Bridgetown* struck a mine laid by the Iranian vessel

*Sirjan* on the previous night. "It blew an eight-and-a-half by ten foot hole in the tanker, halting activity in the northern Gulf to the embarrassment of Washington."<sup>13</sup>

The incident demonstrated that conventional naval forces and operations were not sufficient to prevent unconventional maritime attacks. Middle East Force developed a plan that provided for constant patrolling to prevent attacks. Rather than using regular naval vessels, the plan concluded that "the area could be better patrolled by a mixture of helicopters and small boats, augmented by SEALs and Marines. They could range over a wide area and were better equipped to deal with unconventional threats. These assets would also be far less expensive than additional warships."<sup>14</sup>

The United States launched a unique effort in response, forming a joint special operations task force based aboard two converted oil barges. For more than a year this force engaged in a daily struggle with Iranian small boats and mine layers for control of the sea lanes in the channelized area north of Bahrain. In every respect, this operation was a remarkable effort and a blueprint for crafting unconventional responses to unconventional threats.<sup>15</sup>

The creation of this joint special operations task force, however, was not without difficulty. The effort was principally ad hoc, and brought together several military communities that had no experience or doctrine to guide their integration. The barges themselves, known as the *Hercules* and *Wimbrown VII*, were leased from Brown & Root. Each barge was deployed to cover a 50-mile section of the threatened sea lane, with its patrol boats and helicopters operating in a 25-mile radius. The barges were towed into open water and anchored. Every few days the barges were repositioned as a protective measure.<sup>16</sup>

*Hercules* and *Wimbrown VII* were each protected by a contingent of Marines, armed with light weapons and augmented by sandbags, armor plating and a handful of crew-served

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<sup>i</sup> Often, these measures consist of nothing more than heightening awareness and increasing the number of lookouts in high-threat areas. Some operators have trained their crews in the use of fire hoses to repel borders, and fewer still have hired private security teams to ride their ships during high-risk transits.

weapons. The assigned patrol boats, manned by Navy SEALs, were a mix of Vietnam-era riverine patrol boats and Mark III special operations craft.<sup>17</sup>

Finding a suitable helicopter force to operate from the barges was more problematic. The Marines wanted the mission, but their helicopters were too large to operate from the barges and Marine pilots lacked experience with night-vision devices. Navy helicopter crews had virtually no experience with night-vision goggles and were not armed with offensive weapons. At the insistence of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and over the objections of the Department of the Army, the 160<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Aviation Regiment was tapped to provide AH-6 and MH-6 "Little Bird" helicopters to the joint task force.<sup>18</sup>

The armed special operations helicopters and Navy patrol boats operated as hunter-killer teams, conducting nightly patrols focused on the threat posed by Iranian small craft engaged in laying mines, and fast boats conducting wolf-pack attacks on oil tankers.<sup>i</sup> Many important lessons were learned as operations progressed. Most notably, the joint task force did not receive clear mission guidance. The Navy officer assigned to command the *Hercules* "bitterly complained that they were not even given a simple mission statement, let alone a basic operational concept."<sup>19</sup> Lacking an operational concept, joint task force assets were sometimes used in an inappropriate manner. Early in the operation, Mark III patrol boats from the *Hercules* were assigned to escort a convoy from north of Bahrain to Kuwait. "The rough seas took a heavy toll on the hulls and crews because the boats were not designed to operate in the open ocean for extended periods."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Small boats, a combination of fast, Swedish-built *Boghammers* and Boston Whaler-type craft manned by Revolutionary Guards, roamed the sea lanes attacking shipping. Armed with 107mm rockets, RPG-7's, and machine guns, this mosquito fleet rarely sank a ship but could inflict serious damage on tankers or their crews. Their favorite tactic was to approach a target, swarm around it, then rake its bridge and superstructure with automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenades. Some 43 attacks included the sinking of the 42,000-ton bulk carrier *Norman Atlantic*. Mines, in conjunction with sea raids, added another deadly threat.

Army helicopter operations in the maritime environment revealed other limitations. Lacking the sophisticated automatic flight control and navigation systems common to naval helicopters, Army flight crews were quickly exhausted by the demands of nightly, low-level, over-water flights. Moreover, their reliance on navigation by dead-reckoning limited the range at which Little Birds could operate from the barges.<sup>i</sup> In response, tactics were devised to allow Navy LAMPS helicopters, with their excellent surface search radar, to control and direct the Army craft.<sup>21</sup>

Astonishingly, few of the lessons learned during *Operation Earnest Will* found their way into joint or navy operational doctrine. *Naval Warfare Publication 3-07.12: Naval Control and Protection of Shipping (NCAPS)* asserts in an introductory paragraph that "the doctrine in this publication is based in large part on the US NCAPS procedures developed for, and lessons learned from *Operation Earnest Will*..." A perusal of this publication, however, reveals no discussion of operations to protect shipping from unconventional threats.

The corpus of joint and navy operational doctrine does include several publications relevant to the protection of shipping from maritime terrorism, but none of these provide an overarching and coherent operational concept. *Joint Publication 3-07: Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other-than-War* and *NWP 3-07: Naval Doctrine for Military Operations Other-than-War* both claim stewardship of counterterrorism operations, but neither points the reader to a subordinate doctrinal publication. Likewise, *Joint Publication 3-07.2: Joint Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Antiterrorism* and its counterpart, *NWP 3-07.2: Navy Doctrine for Antiterrorism/Force Protection*, are concerned strictly with force protection.

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<sup>i</sup> Task Force 160 later augmented the Little Birds with UH-60 Blackhawks, and then replaced them with OH-58D Kiowa Warriors. These aircraft were retrofitted with a TACAN navigation system to allow them to operate at much greater ranges from the barges. Although they were larger and noisier than the Little Birds, their Hellfire missile system made them more lethal against small craft.

The branch of navy doctrine that is most relevant to the task of protecting commercial shipping from maritime terrorism is Naval Coastal Warfare (NCW). *NWP 3-10: Naval Coastal Warfare*, provides doctrinal guidance and planning information regarding NCW operational concepts. The purpose of NCW is to protect strategic shipping and other friendly vessels operating within the inshore or coastal area, anchorages, and harbors, and to ensure the uninterrupted flow of strategic cargo and units to the combatant commander.

Key mission areas within the realm of NCW, such as Harbor Defense/Port Security operations and Harbor Approach Defense operations, are relevant to the protection of shipping from maritime terrorism.<sup>i</sup> Although these operations are designed to protect strategic shipping and friendly naval vessels, the doctrine could easily be applied to protect all commercial shipping in a designated inshore area. Additionally, it is tailored to unconventional threats, such as divers, mini-submersibles, mines and small craft, which are the preferred methods of maritime terrorists.

Although it serves as an excellent starting point, NCW doctrine is inadequate to serve as an operational doctrine for the protection of shipping from maritime terrorism. Its most significant shortcoming is that it is narrowly focused on strategic ports and harbors and their immediate approaches. As stated in *NWP 3-10*: “Harbor Approach Defense operations are limited in scope and tied directly to harbor defense operations....”<sup>22</sup> Prospective operations to suppress maritime terrorism may not center on a port or harbor. Sustained counterterrorism operations in a maritime region such as the Strait of Malacca, or the waters

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<sup>i</sup> Harbor Defense/Port Security operations “employ sea-based and land-based forces to defend harbors, ports, inland waterways, and the water approaches against conventional and asymmetric air, surface, and subsurface attack, enemy mine-laying operations, and sabotage.” This mission is further defined in *NWP 3-10.3: Inshore Undersea Warfare*, which serves as operational doctrine for the Navy’s Inshore Undersea Warfare force. Dovetailing with the inshore mission are Harbor Approach Defense operations, which “employ sea-based and land-based forces to protect and defend strategic shipping at SLOC entry and termination points ... at the convergence of blue water and the designated harbor defense area of operations.”

off the Horn of Africa, would require modification of the organizational, operational, and logistical concepts presented in *NWP 3-10*.

Naval Coastal Warfare doctrine also lacks sufficient attention to operations involving conventional naval forces, such as helicopters or maritime patrol aircraft. In fact, *NWP 3-10* asserts: “Harbor Approach Defense should not overlap or interfere with traditional ‘blue water’ sea control operations.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, NCW doctrine does not leverage joint operations or unified action. With the exception of the Coast Guard, which is well-integrated in the operational concept, *NWP 3-10* does not supply the commander with information about the capabilities and limitations of non-Navy assets. Finally, NCW doctrine does not recommend an organizational framework for combined operations with host nation or allied forces.

### **A Doctrine for Maritime Counterterrorism**

“The power of doctrine lies in its ability to unify forces with singleness of purpose.”<sup>24</sup> Operational doctrine for the protection of commercial shipping from maritime terrorism, hereafter referred to as Maritime Counterterrorism (MCT), should be based on the principles of military operations other-than-war (MOOTW). These principles provide an excellent foundation for a comprehensive and coherent operational doctrine.

*Objective.* Often, the political objectives which bring about a MOOTW mission do not address the desired military end state or specify measures of success. Commanders must “understand the strategic aims, set appropriate objectives, and ensure that these aims and objectives contribute to unity of effort.”<sup>25</sup>

In order to direct MCT operations toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective, missions and tasks should be developed. Some of these missions, such as Harbor Defense/Port Security and Harbor Approach Defense would parallel Naval Coastal Warfare

operations. Others, such as counterterrorism operations in littorals, straits and archipelagos not associated with a port or harbor would require a modification of NCW operational concepts.

Missions should be broken down into tasks. For example, if the mission were to prevent attacks on commercial shipping by fast boats in an archipelagic sea lane, tasks might include: littoral surveillance; air and surface patrolling; contact analysis and reporting; interdiction; fishing vessel control; vessel movement control; and host nation liaison. Identifying tasks helps to clarify the operational objective, facilitates operational design and aids in the assignment of assets.

*Unity of Effort.* This MOOTW principle is derived from the principle of war, unity of command. It emphasizes the need for ensuring all means are directed to a common purpose. “However, in MOOTW, achieving unity of effort is often complicated by a variety of international, foreign and domestic military and non-military participants, the lack of definitive command arrangements among them, and varying views of the objective.”<sup>26</sup>

A doctrine for MCT operations should provide a command structure that allows for both formal and informal relationships. The joint force commander should have full command authority over all US military forces assigned to the operation. Unconventional naval warfare assets should remain at the center of MCT operations. These forces include the Naval Special Warfare and Naval Inshore Undersea Warfare Groups. Conventional naval forces, such as small surface combatants, naval helicopters and maritime patrol aircraft, also have valuable capabilities that should not be overlooked.

A command structure for MCT operations should presume the participation of joint military forces. Coast Guard assets, such as cutters, patrol boats, Port Security Units, and Visit, Board, Search and Seize Teams, contribute valuable law-enforcement experience and

are a natural fit in most littoral operations. Unique operational capabilities are also present in joint special operations forces, including Army Rangers and the 160<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Aviation Regiment.

Command arrangements with host nation or allied forces may not be as well-defined or include full command authority. Informal relationships may also exist between US military forces and other government agencies, such as the FBI or CIA. Under such circumstances, MCT doctrine must establish procedures for liaison and coordination to achieve unity of effort. “Because MOOTW will often be conducted at the small unit level, it is important that all levels understand the informal and formal relationships.”<sup>27</sup>

MCT doctrine should provide links to other relevant doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures. This doctrine should benefit from the synergy of bringing together operational areas like Naval Coastal Warfare, Mine Countermeasures, and Naval Special Warfare. At the tactical level, the doctrine should profit from the research and experience embodied in various tactics, techniques and procedures publications.

*Security.* Commanders must avoid complacency and be ready to counter activity that could bring harm to units or jeopardize the operation. “This principle enhances freedom of action by reducing vulnerability to hostile acts, influence, or surprise.”<sup>28</sup> In addition to providing security for US and allied forces, it may be necessary to protect participating agencies or civilians.

MCT operational doctrine should emphasize the inherent right of self and group-defense against hostile acts or hostile intent. Moreover, the doctrine should suggest procedures for providing security against unconventional forces that leverage their attacks with surprise and deception. Security considerations must be weighed against the needs of other principles, including objective, unity of effort and restraint.

*Restraint.* Commanders must develop procedures to ensure the prudent application of appropriate military capability. “A single act could cause significant military and political consequences; therefore, judicious use of force is necessary.”<sup>29</sup> Excessive force can antagonize the host nation government or local population, thereby damaging the legitimacy of US forces and enhancing the legitimacy of opposition groups. A doctrine for MCT operations must be responsive to the value of restraint. This is especially important when considering rules of engagement, which will generally be more restrictive, detailed and sensitive to political concerns than in conventional operations.

*Perseverance.* Some MOOTW require years to achieve the desired results. Commanders should be prepared for the measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims. “Often, the patient, resolute, and persistent pursuit of national goals and objectives, for as long as necessary to achieve them, is a requirement for success.”<sup>30</sup> This principle is particularly relevant to counterterrorism operations, which require extraordinary determination and endurance. A doctrine for MCT operations should recognize this requirement and provide for sustainability through organizational, operational, and logistical mechanisms.

*Legitimacy.* Committed forces must sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host government, where applicable. “In MOOTW, legitimacy is a condition based on the perception by a specific audience of the legality, morality, or rightness of a set of actions.”<sup>31</sup> This audience might be the US public, foreign nations, or the local population in the area of operations. If this audience perceives an operation to be legitimate, they will support the actions of US, allied or host nation forces. If an operation is not perceived as legitimate, this audience may actively resist these actions. “In MOOTW, legitimacy is frequently a decisive element.”<sup>32</sup>

Doctrine can best serve the legitimacy of MCT operations by giving careful consideration to the proceeding five principles. “Legitimacy may depend on adherence to objectives agreed to by the international community, ensuring the action is appropriate to the situation....”<sup>33</sup> In addition, legitimacy may be reinforced by restraint in the use of force, the type of forces employed, and the conduct of the forces involved. Finally, the perception of legitimacy by the US public will be strengthened if there is an assurance that the security of US forces has been given due consideration and American lives are not being needlessly or carelessly risked.

## **Summary**

The threat to commercial shipping posed by terrorist organizations is significant. Whether they are in port, or navigating a restricted waterway, large commercial vessels are easy targets for determined terrorists. Moreover, the value of these vessels and their cargoes make them attractive not only to regional terror groups, but also to international organizations with aspirations of disrupting global economic connectivity.

The US Navy has inherited the task of protecting global maritime access to markets and resources. Naval operational doctrine however, has not kept pace with the threat. Despite a shift in emphasis from “blue water” operations to the littorals, naval doctrine for the protection of shipping remains focused on conventional air, surface and subsurface threats. What little doctrine does exist for the protection of shipping from unconventional threats is concerned strictly with strategic ports and harbors, and is insufficient to guide wider operations. What is more, the lessons of *Operation Earnest Will*, our most recent experience with unconventional threats to shipping, seem to have been forgotten by operational planners. Although the assets, training, and tactical doctrine necessary to

conduct a counterterrorism operation in the maritime arena exist, there is no coherent and comprehensive operational doctrine to tie it all together.

The US Navy should prepare for the possibility that we may be called upon to ensure access by crafting an operational doctrine for Maritime Counterterrorism. Some of what is necessary to create this doctrine is already codified in the canon of Naval Coastal Warfare. The remainder, however, will need to be created from scratch. Contemporary joint doctrine correctly places counterterrorism under the aegis of military operations other-than-war. Accordingly, the principles of MOOTW are relevant to Maritime Counterterrorism operations. The principles of objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy are well-suited to address the unique challenges presented by maritime terrorism, and provide a solid departure point in the creation of this important operational doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed Blanche, "Terror Attacks Threaten Gulf's Oil Routes," Lkd, *Jane's Intelligence Review* 01 December 2002 at "Focus page," 5 November 2002, <online database> [6 December 2002].

<sup>2</sup> Keith Bradsher, "Warnings From Al Qaeda Stir Fear That Terrorists May Attack Oil Tankers," *New York Times*, 12 Dec 2002, 24(A).

<sup>3</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, "Terrorist Threats Target Asia," Lkd, *Jane's Intelligence Review* 01 July 2000 at "Asia page," 27 June 2000, <online database> [6 December 2002].

<sup>4</sup> Sam J. Tangredi, "Beyond the Sea and Jointness," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (September 2001): 62.

<sup>5</sup> Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and US Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2001): 13.

<sup>6</sup> Carl Conetta, "Dislocating Alcyoneus: How to Combat Al Qaeda and the New Terrorism," *Project on Defense Alternatives Briefing Memo no. 23*, 25 June 2002, <<http://www.comw.org/pda/0206dislocate.html>> [15 January 2003]: 3.

<sup>7</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, "The Asymmetric Threat from Maritime Terrorism," Lkd, *Jane's Fighting Ships 2002-2003* at "Analysis page," 20 December 2001, <online database> [17 December 2002].

<sup>8</sup> "Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) [Tamil Tigers]," Lkd, *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism* 15 at "Asia, Sri Lanka page," 24 May 2002, <online database> [17 December 2002].

<sup>9</sup> Gunaratna, "The Asymmetric Threat from Maritime Terrorism."

<sup>10</sup> Blanche.

<sup>11</sup> Bradsher.

<sup>12</sup> Gunaratna, "The Asymmetric Threat from Maritime Terrorism."

<sup>13</sup> David B. Crist, "Joint Special Operations in Support of Earnest Will," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Autumn-Winter 2001-02): 15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>22</sup> Chief of Naval Operations, *Naval Coastal Warfare*, Naval Warfare Publication 3-10 (Washington, DC: May 1998): 2-12.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 2-12.

<sup>24</sup> Wayne P. Hughes, "The Power in Doctrine," *Naval War College Review* 47, no. 3 (1995): 10.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other-than-War*, Joint Publication 3-07 (Washington, DC: 16 June 1995): II-1.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., II-3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., II-3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., II-3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., II-4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., II-5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., II-5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., II-5.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., II-5.

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